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France cracks down on terrorist network

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PARIS — The French Government stepped up its struggle against international terrorism this week-end by expelling two Libyan "diplomats" and revealing plans to streamline the national security apparatus.

It also announced that important documents concerning terrorist activities were seized last week with the arrest of Andre Olivier, identified as one of the leaders of the notorious "Direct Action Network."

At the same time, the new conservative government of Premier Jacques Chirac denied that France

had been involved in any secret agreements with Libya and the Palestine Liberation Organization over freedom of movement for terrorists in exchange for immunity from attacks.

The allegations, published in the Los Angeles Times, were "rejected categorically" by government spokesmen who described them as "totally unfounded."

It is clear that the conservative government spawned after the March 16 parliamentary election has made the fight against terrorism one of its primary responsibilities.

The two Libyans ordered out of the country allegedly planned a bomb attack on the U.S. Consulate in

Paris. A case found in their possession contained weapons and explosives.

Both men are protected by diplomatic immunity. But French Police sources said they probably had been involved in "backup activities" for various Libyan-sponsored groups.

In another move last week to coordinate international anti-terror activities, the French government confirmed that it had accepted the U.S. proposal to put terrorism on the agenda for the forthcoming Tokyo summit of the seven major industrialized nations.

The previous French Socialist government of Premier Laurent Fabius preferred what it described as

"bilateral cooperation" on anti-terror warfare and skirted international discussion of the subject.

But faced with terrorism as a major national issue and trying to fulfill its electoral pledges, the Chirac government has outlined a plan to reorganize its security and intelligence services.

A special "national security council" will be created as an adjunct of the office of the prime minister. It will include officials of the interior, justice, defense and foreign affairs ministries and will work closely with the main intelligence and counterespionage service.

A "directorate of antiterrorist struggle" also will be formed under

the overall supervision of Security Minister Robert Pandreau. The directorate will handle terrorism "as a whole" from investigation up to the trial of the suspect.

The government also plans to create special courts staffed by judges familiar with the intricacies of international terrorism.

The movement of foreigners, particularly from Arab countries, is expected to come under increased surveillance and may well be curtailed. Requests for political asylum will be handled by the Interior Ministry after police investigation and not by the Foreign Affairs ministry as in the past.